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THE MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT OF A COLLEGE CHRISTIAN UNION

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THE MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT OF A COLLEGE CHRISTIAN UNION

BY

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BRITISH COLLEGE CHRISTIAN UNION

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The Missionary Department

OF A

College Christian Union.

1. ITS "RAISON D'ÊTRE." WHY SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN UNION HAVE A MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT?

It has been well said that "missions should constitute the business of the Church." The College Christian Union, as belonging to the Church of Christ, should take its part in this "business" of missions. The "business" is of a twofold nature —the direct and immediate mission to those near at hand, and the less direct but none the less immediate mission to those far off. By the command of the King of kings every Christian should take part in this twofold mission. And in accordance with this the members of the Christian Union join in prayer and Bible study and Christian fellowship with the object, first and foremost, of winning their fellow-students for Him who is "the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"; the last three words reminding us that there is a further object, secondary as touching order and directness, but pervading the nearer and more

direct object. This all-pervading object is nothing less than winning the whole world for Christ. An implicit obedience to the last command of our Divine Master demands that the Christian Union should be permeated with this wide missionary idea. Without it, as history and experience tell us, Christian Churches—and likewise Christian Unions—will wither and die. With it, on the other hand, will come much reflex blessing. It is a Christ-like breadth of mind, which can include the whole world in its horizon and yet not overlook the small details of that which lies near at hand. Let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. May the Holy Spirit work in our Unions, removing the narrow-mindedness and ignorance which is the cause of so much weakness and failure, and ever widening the horizon of our vision till it embraces the whole world.

If, then, the Christian Union has a mission to the whole world, it is evident that it should have a department dealing with that mission.

II. ITS PURPOSE AND POSSIBILITIES. THE SCOPE OF THE MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT.

While at College, our attitude towards the wide field of home and foreign missions must necessarily be one mainly of prayerful interest and study. Such interest and study we should naturally endeavour to spread amongst our fellow-students.

Generally speaking, then, the purpose of the Missionary Department should be to awaken

interest amongst students in the cause of missions, where such interest does not exist, and to educate those who are thus interested in the main features of the problem of the world's evangelization.

There are several difficulties in the way of carrying out this purpose, but they are by no means insurmountable. The chief difficulty is the very real one of time. Some have more time than others, but all will experience difficulty in the matter. In almost every case, however, "where there is a will there is a way," and a sense of duty together with prayerful economy of time will overcome all obstacles. It often happens that those who have a harder course of College study have a longer period in which to get through it, and therefore a longer period in which to complete their missionary education. Another difficulty is the lack of material which will enable students to secure, with as little outlay of time and trouble as is consistent with so great an object, a thorough grasp of the main features of the problem of the world's evangelization. The S.V.M.U., though its Educational Scheme is still in an experimental stage, hopes before long to be able to issue a Four Years' Cycle of Study on Foreign Missions, covering the whole field. This cycle will be capable of adaptation to the varying conditions of the different faculties—arts, medicine, theology, &c. And at the same time it is hoped that the smaller but equally important problem of home missions will be duly dealt with.

But no difficulties should deter the Christian Union from at once undertaking the obligation

laid on it by none other than the King of kings Himself. Nor should the great opportunities be lost sight of. One of the chief arguments for the existence of the Christian Union is that College life presents the greatest opportunity of winning fellow-students for Christ. The same argument holds good for the existence of the Missionary Department. Never again in after life will students have such an opportunity of becoming interested in missions. Never again will there be such facilities for missionary study. If we neglect to interest and educate our fellow-students in missions, many a man and woman will leave College and miss their true vocation in life, never having heard that call to the mission-field which God meant to come through us. The opportunities at College for the true zealot in the Kingdom of God are unparalleled. From the ranks of students must come the leaders in the Church at home and abroad. And on the missionary policy of each Christian Union now will largely depend in the days to come the existence of a strong home pastorate supporting a growing Church abroad. It is a solemn thought that the Christian Union by neglecting its Missionary Department may be retarding the coming of our Lord Jesus.

III. ITS ORGANISATION. THE MISSIONARY COMMITTEE AND ITS RELATION TO OTHER MISSIONARY ORGANISATIONS.

The missionary work of the Christian Union should be under the direction of a sub-committee

of from two or three to five. The chairman of this sub-committee should be called the Missionary Secretary, and should have a place on the Executive Committee of the Christian Union, and should regularly report on the work of the sub-committee, so that the Executive Committee have their due share in the missionary work. The members of the Missionary Committee should be students of missions in the highest sense, and, generally speaking, those who expect to devote their lives to missionary work, as such may be expected to have the best qualifications for organising the Missionary Department of their Christian Union. But in some cases this may be neither possible nor desirable. In Colleges where there is a Student Volunteer Circle the Committee of that Circle should be included in the Missionary Committee of the Christian Union. It is only natural that those who have signed the Declaration, "It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary," should form themselves into a Volunteer Circle,[1] but there is a very serious danger that they may thus segregate themselves from the general life of the Christian Union. If, however, their Committee is included in the Missionary Committee of the Christian Union, and they are thus united, as a body, organically with the Christian Union, this danger is largely avoided. The idea that the burden of responsibility as to foreign missions rests entirely on Student Volunteers and their committee should

[1] Some hints on the Volunteer Circle will be found in No. 4 of the American Student Volunteer Series.

be strongly deprecated. *All* members of the Christian Union have an obligation to fulfil in the cause of missions.

In some centres, again, there are other missionary societies or bands entirely independent of the Christian Union. The Missionary Committee of the Christian Union should, when possible, keep in close touch with these. There are marked advantages in having them become, not only nominally, but also actually and organically, a part of the Christian Union.

IV. ITS METHODS OF WORK. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. *The General Missionary Meeting.*

The meeting should be held *at regular intervals* (weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or once a term). Students who will come to no other meeting of the Christian Union will sometimes be persuaded to come to this. It often forms the first link to attract them to circles of Christian friends. It furnishes all with living testimonies to the value of missions, and combats their depreciation. A majority of the missionary meetings should ordinarily be devoted to foreign missions, as the foreign field is a far wider one to cover than the home field, and as a rule people are more ignorant concerning its needs and claims.

The meeting should be *conducted* by a student or by some professor or minister who is filled with the missionary spirit and in close touch with the Christian Union.

The *speakers* should be missionaries on furlough, professors and ministers well qualified to speak on home and foreign missions, the Travelling Secretary,[1] and other representatives of the S.V M.U., Student Volunteers about to sail for the foreign mission-field, and so forth. Or the meeting may be addressed by one or more of the students themselves.

The secret of the success of a missionary meeting lies chiefly in the careful and prayerful *preparation* of all the details beforehand.

The following *accessory features* will add to the interest and abiding influence of the meeting :—

(*a*) Maps are indispensable, and charts and diagrams will often be found useful.

(*b*) The meeting is sometimes a good opportunity for reading out extracts from the letters of former students who are now engaged in missionary work. This strengthens the tie between the Colleges and the mission-field.

(*c*) When a prominent authority on missions visits the Christian Union, let him have an opportunity of seeing in private any who wish to ask for further information.

(*d*) A bookstall at the door with S.V.M.U. and other missionary literature for sale has been tried in some centres with marked success.

(*e*) Prayer should have an important part in the meeting.

(*f*) The hymns should be carefully chosen, and pains taken with the singing.

[1] Full advantage should be taken of the visit of the S.V.M.U. Travelling Secretary for the development of the work of the Missionary Department.

2. *The Missionary Band.*

I.—Its Purpose.

1. To grasp the first principles of Missions. It is imperative that every generation of students shall realise :—

a. The last commands of Christ: "Tarry ye, receive ye, go ye."

b. The responsibility resting on the Christian Church.

c. The blessed promises to those who do exactly what they are told.

2. To prove the power of intelligent prayer. Facts are the fuel that feed missionary fires. The life that limits its sympathies will hardly rise to the standard of our Lord's command: "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest." For "the field is the world," whose "fields are white to harvest."

3. To meet the growing demand for accurate knowledge.

II.—Its Members.

There are four classes of Christian students :

1. Students who are preparing to enter the home ministry. The success of foreign missionary enterprise depends quite as much upon intelligent and sympathetic pastors of the home churches as upon the missionaries at the front. Thus it is the duty of every man who expects to influence the missionary work and gifts and prayers of a congregation to make himself an authority upon the subject of missions.

2. Students who expect to devote their lives to foreign mission work. If they give themselves to this study all through their College days, they will be far better prepared for their life-work than they would be otherwise. It is a great mistake to put it off, thinking that they can make it up in the Theological College or post-graduate course, for often very meagre opportunities for the study of missions are afforded there. Even where the opportunities are ample, it would be a great advantage to the student to have used his earlier College days. He would then be in a position to take up much more advanced missionary studies during his second course.

It is an even greater mistake to defer such study until one reaches the foreign field. It is true that some questions can be best studied on the foreign field, but a careful study of missions as a whole can be carried on much more successfully at home, where one has more time and access to a wider range of missionary literature. Moreover, a careful study of home mission problems will prove invaluable to one subsequently grappling with similar problems on the foreign field.

3. Students who have decided on some lay profession. Such students will need this study to prepare them to discharge their responsibility to the world as educated Christian laymen. The importance of this cannot be over-estimated.

4. Students who are in that state of indecision which is so often found at College, and makes them drift through life without any settled pur-

pose. Such students need this study to help them to decide intelligently what their life-work should be.

III.—Its Organisation.

1. Its membership should not be confined to Student Volunteers, but should be open to all Christian students. Not less than four or five or more than fifteen members should belong to one band. In Universities and larger Colleges several such bands should be at work. The number of these will depend upon the number of students who want to take part. Their arrangements, too, will vary. In centres where there are more than one College, intercollegiate bands will, as a rule, be found most profitable.

2. Its officers.

A. The President or Leader, elected for one term, and re-eligible for a year, is indispensable. He should be a senior student, and, if possible, the best informed member of the band.

His duties should be :—

(*a*) To insist on regularity of attendance and strict punctuality at the beginning and the close of the meeting; (*b*) to apply for the Outline Studies and the *Suggestions to Leaders* from the central office, giving hints as to profitable division of time and best books on each study; (*c*) to receive any questions on the subjects under consideration, and to apply when needed to the office for answers; (*d*) and to foster a close relationship between the band and the other Christian associations in College.

B. The Secretary should be subject to the same

method of election as the President, and should have some time to give to his work. His duties should be. To prepare cards of the meetings; to give all members a reminder three days previous to the next meeting; to keep the minute-book; to collect a small subscription each term for expenses (the surplus to go towards buying missionary books for the use of the band); to report, at least once a term, to the Educational Secretary at the S.V.M.U. office as to the way in which the study is taken up and its results. This will be greatly appreciated by the office.

3. The Missionary Band Committee.

Where there are many bands, the Presidents and Secretaries should form a committee called the Missionary Band Committee.

This should meet at the beginning of each session to discuss how to treat the proposed course of study, and to make grants of appropriate books to the library. It should be summoned by the Missionary Secretary of the Christian Union.

IV.—Its Formation.

As soon as some members of the Christian Union are secured who are interested in Missions, call a preliminary meeting. After prayer, let the meeting elect from those present a capable President and Secretary. Arrange the time, length, and frequency of meeting. Divide the world into mission-fields, allotting some definite field to each member; or, better still, let each member of the band take in a missionary periodical and be responsible for bringing the latest news from that paper.

Decide on some suitable course of study, if possible, that which the S.V.M.U. presents in its Educational Scheme, and secure a promise from several present to prepare a paper. Ask the Secretary to arrange for the place and the number of papers at each meeting. Ascertain what neighbouring libraries containing missionary books are accessible to students. And lastly, draw up a few simple *binding rules*, have the same either cyclostyled or printed. Circulate these, and *keep to them*.

V.—Its Preparation.

Whenever the Student Volunteer Missionary Union has prepared or suggested a text-book as a guide to a course of study, let *each* member of the band secure a copy in good time and read it through. Let the President apply for the Outline Studies and Suggestions to Leaders, and let those who are called upon to prepare papers study their respective parts of the subject, find their way to the libraries, and take out the books which are referred to in the text-book or seem to bear on the subject. If possible, arrange to have part of the vacation free in which to get up the paper. The following suggestions from experience should be closely followed :—

1. Make a plan. The architect always draws a plan before a stone is laid. 2. Begin and end well. 3. Prepare condensed facts and nuggets. 4. Group thoughts under headings. A model stands out in relief. 5. Inspire thought by thoughts expressed. 6. Be missionary throughout. Do not side-track.

Warnings :—1. Do not attempt to cover too much ground. "Capture strategic and pivotal points of the field." 2. Do not indulge in padding and generalities. If you aim at nothing you are sure to hit it. 3. Do not use masses of statistics, and so confuse. Xerxes had too big a fleet to conquer. 4. Do not, if you can speak, read out what you have written.

VI.—Its Conduct.

Let the importance of prayer be fully realised. About a quarter of the time should be thus spent. Well up to time the President sees that doors are closed and silence secured. The meeting should open with prayer and the reading of a suitable portion of Scripture. It should last an hour or an hour and a quarter.[1] A meeting of an hour and a quarter gives more time for discussion and news from the field, and is often found better than one of an hour.

The Secretary then reads the minutes, and business transactions follow. This should in no case take longer than five or ten minutes. Thirty minutes are now open for hearing papers or speakers. If members of the band can find the time to prepare and are able to deliver a thoroughly condensed address, *two* such addresses lasting fifteen minutes each will be best. Otherwise *one* or *two* papers read will do much to inform.

[1] Some bands have found it very helpful to have a short ten minutes for tea and talk, as the members are assembling, before the announced time of the meeting. Each student in his turn provides the tea.

In no case should a meeting be addressed by more than two of its members at one meeting. Time is now left for questioning the readers speakers, or President. A few minutes should be given to hear the latest news from the fields, or papers, represented by the various members. This encourages the reading of monthly magazines, and so stimulates prayer.

The President will do well at least once a term to emphasise the true objects of the band and the importance of taking notes.

It is well worth while taking notes of a *course* of study, for they will be useful later on. What is thus tabulated and indexed can be revised and learnt.

Lastly. Give not less than ten minutes at the close to quiet, earnest intercession.

Let the readers, or speakers, be encouraged to pray over the words that they have just uttered. Let there be a silent time in which the Holy Spirit may plead with each individual heart. Then rise from prayer in fellowship with Him, and in answer to His call will come the ready response—

"Here am I, send me, send me."

3. *The Missionary Library and Reading Room.*

(*a*) *The Missionary Library.*

Every College should have a carefully selected collection of missionary literature of its own, or see that such a collection is secured and kept by the College.

I.—Its Importance.

1. To ensure interesting, profitable, and progressive meetings, it is absolutely essential that students have access to the best material.

2. To help students in determining aright their life-work, biographical works are particularly useful.

3. To have near at hand as complete a collection of missionary literature as possible, will enable those who are to devote their lives to mission work, either at home or abroad, to carry on special studies, and thus to secure better preparation for their life-work.

4. To recognise the importance and extent of missionary literature, and to provide every Christian Union library with the best, will be aiding students, who are to hold responsible positions in after life, to have an intelligent interest in the great work and problems which confront the Church in their generation.

II.—Its Place.

If the Christian Union has a home of its own—either a building or rooms which are accessible and pleasant—the library should be situated there. Otherwise, it should be part of the regular College library. In any case, the books should be kept close together.

III.—Its Contents.

1. Missionary Books (on home and foreign missions).

In general the collection of books should include

a missionary encyclopædia, a missionary atlas, general histories of missions, works showing the power and fruitfulness of missions, books on the different religions of the world, standard works on different fields, treatises on the different phases of missionary work, missionary conference reports, works on missionary administration, the best biographies of leading missionaries and other Christian workers.

All these classes of books may not be represented at first, but the aim should be to make the collection as comprehensive as possible at the beginning, and to add to it from time to time.

2. Missionary periodicals and assorted literature.

The Missionary Committee may well take the time and trouble to explore this field. Tracts and leaflets bearing on the same subject should be bound together, or grouped in regular pamphlet boxes or stout manilla envelopes, and then indexed. "The Best Hundred Missionary Books," Parts I. and II., and the Model Libraries published by the S.V.M.U. will be found useful in starting the library.

3. *The Student Movement* and *The Missionary Review of the World.*

In each College there should be a complete file of each. The former contains courses of missionary study, and also more practical hints on awakening and developing missionary interest among students than any other paper. The latter affords the best survey of the world field, and gives the best account of the progress of missionary enterprise as a whole.

Wherever there are students who hope to enter the medical profession, the Edinburgh *Medical Mission Quarterly*, *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad*, or *Mercy and Truth* should be taken in. There should also be bound volumes of the back numbers of the missionary publications of the denominations most prominent in each College. Many denominational societies will send free copies of monthlies to libraries, where they will be read and valued.[1] The files of these papers should be bound at the close of each year.

4. An effort should be made in each College to secure a choice collection of missionary maps, charts, and diagrams. The members of some bands have prepared many original charts, which have been used effectively in creating missionary interest and deepening missionary impressions.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the importance of keeping missionary literature up-to-date. Some libraries which were up to date a few years ago, are not so now. It is equally important to keep making new maps and charts, else the work may be brought into ridicule. All such should be dated.

IV.—Its Formation.

Before attempting to raise money let a liberal estimate be made of the books to be secured. Aim at beginning with a nucleus of a library. Let the Missionary Committee make out a list of books that are needed at once, in order that

[1] Cf. "Best Hundred Missionary Books," pp. 25-28, for Addresses.

the present course of study may be taken up. Let them decide on attempting to raise a £1, £3, £5, £10, or £20 library.[1] Different methods may be employed to obtain them.

1. Raise by subscription the required amount among the students, professors, and friends.

2. Write out the names of the books that are to be obtained, placing the price opposite the name of each book, and leaving room on the same line for a person's name. Circulate this list among the students, professors, and friends of the College, asking each person to mark the book or books which he will place in the library. Bands, associations, &c., may thus combine to secure the most expensive set of books.

3. Pray for guidance as to approaching some friend of the Association who would think it a privilege to found a missionary library if its special need and importance were rightly brought to his or her attention.

4. Try to influence College authorities, as has been done in some places, to make a grant from the Library Fund for the establishment of a missionary corner in the library. It can best be brought about by interesting some influential professor.

V.—Its Use.

1. The library should be accessible to students at the most favourable hours in the week.

2. There should be one or more librarians,

[1] Cf. The Bibliographies in "Make Jesus King," pp. 276, 277, and *S. V.* October, 1896, and October, 1897, and *S. M.* October, 1898.

whose business it is to see that the books, pamphlets, and periodicals are kept in circulation and returned in time. *This is where most missionary libraries fail.* Marked chapters, articles, or pages can be brought before the notice of students by them. The librarians should be in charge at regular times, if only for a few minutes. They should show tact and good temper in their work.

3. In one centre it is an understood thing that every Student Volunteer gives a book during his course, and periodical notices of new and good books are posted up on view to serve as a reminder. This arrangement might well be extended to members of missionary bands.

4. At the first missionary meeting of the College year there should be a short, interesting, and suggestive speech on missionary bibliography. Let the speaker call attention to the books in the library in a way that will interest students, help them in inspecting it, and guide their reading. Short extracts of the choicest parts may often be read to the meeting with advantage. At subsequent missionary meetings it may be well for the leader to call attention to literature that will enable students who have been specially interested to take away with them further information, and so follow up the work.

5. The librarian and leaders of missionary bands can best promote the use of the library by being well acquainted with the books themselves, the subjects they deal with, the names of the books that ought to be procured or have

recently been issued. The man who is full of any subject is sure to stimulate those with whom he comes in contact with a desire and a purpose to know more themselves. This is especially true of such a living and inspiring subject as missions.

b The Reading Room.

If the Christian Union has a room of its own in which to keep its missionary library, this room can be fitted up as a comfortable and attractive reading room, where students can read the latest missionary periodicals, prepare papers for Missionary Bands, or otherwise study missionary problems, with all the books of reference close at hand. The following features will add to the usefulness of the room :—

(*a*) A few maps and diagrams on the wall.

(*b*) A board with notices about general missionary meetings and the Missionary Bands, carefully prepared missionary "nuggets," and extracts from the letters of missionaries, &c.

(*c*) A bookstall for B.C.C.U. and S.V.M.U. literature open at stated times.

4. *Prayer, systematic giving, and personal work for missions.*

If a real missionary interest has been awakened in the Christian Union, the results should be seen in –

(1) The increase of prayer for missions in private and at the daily and weekly prayer-meetings. The B.C.C.U. Cycle of Prayer should always be used, and special requests from the

mission-field should be carefully noticed. The less self-centred prayer is (whether in private or at prayer-meetings) the greater is the blessing. Let us pray for ourselves and our own Christian Union, by all means, but let us never forget to pray for the S.V.M.U. and the General and Theological College Departments, the W.S.C.F., and the wide field of home and foreign missions.

(2) The increase of systematic giving for missions. There should be some scheme, however small, to encourage systematic self-denial and systematic giving for some special object. In some centres there may be a College Mission to support. In others the claims of the Bombay Settlement for women and similar organisations should be recognised. Some of the larger centres will be able to support a missionary or a native worker in the field, others a small school or a preaching-room, or some beds in a hospital. Or the giving may take the form of a regular subscription to the B.C.C.U., or to home or foreign missionary societies. The weakest Christian Union that has anything of the missionary spirit can do something in this line.

(3) The increase in personal work for missions. Missionary Meetings and Missionary Bands should be followed up by much personal work. In our social life there will be many an opportunity of talking personally with our fellow-students, and pointing out to them the tremendous claims of missions, the tremendous force of our Lord's words, "Go ye." The importance and privilege of this work cannot be over-estimated. It will

need much prayer and tact, but it will be the means of leading many to give up all and follow their Master, wherever He calls, even if it be to a city slum or to the uttermost parts of the earth.

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